

“WHO INVENTED “THE PETERSON ROLL”?

By Olympic Champion Ben Peterson

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In late winter and early spring it is my pleasure to attend various regional, state and national tournaments for grade school, high school and college age wrestlers. I meet and visit with a lot of wrestling people this way.

At least 50 times in the past 2 months I have been asked, “Who invented **The Peterson Roll**, you or your brother, John?” Maybe you have had the same question. Let me answer it the best I know how.

To be honest with you it would be easiest to claim to be the inventor and be done with it. But it really is more complex than that and I do need to live with myself, so I will not in good conscience claim to have invented the move.

From my first year of wrestling as a freshman at Cumberland High School in northwestern Wisconsin, we had a “Peterson Roll.” We thought and said it was named after a senior by the name of Don Peterson. To get an escape he would tripod (raise his hips and knees) and then roll forward and over the inside shoulder to cut off his opponent’s controlling arm (Similar to the motion of a Granby Roll). I believe all through high school that was the Peterson Roll to me. We attempted elbow control rolls also but never had great success because of its inferior technique.

When I arrived as a freshman at Iowa State University, rolls took on a whole new perspective. It seemed to me that everyone on our team from Iowa high schools was saturated with rolls. Coach Nichols and Coach Anderson were masters at rolls. It seemed to me they had dozens of ways to use them. By my sophomore year I was working wrist control rolls myself and finding definite success.

The fact that you can both reverse and score back points off of rolls was exactly what I needed. When I couldn’t take a man down, a roll for 2, 4, 5 points (or a fall) erased all my frustrations on the feet. By my senior season rolls had become a trademark for me. Many a time my opponents were reminded by their coach and teammates to “watch his roll.”

There were a lot of other people doing rolls at that time and I wasn’t doing a lot of unique things with them. But I was doing a lot of rolls. I won several key Big 8 Conference and NCAA matches using rolls.

As soon as my senior season concluded we began freestyle preparation for the Olympics. Rolling had little use there, except I did find the threat of a wrist control roll caused some wrestlers to hesitate committing to their turns.

By all rights, rolling should have been a thing of the past for me. But with an Olympic medal in hand I was asked to teach at clinics and summer wrestling camps. That has been something I have always enjoyed. The intensity and exposure to wrestlers and coaches from all over the country has put a smile on my face and excitement in my bones for 30+ years. Rolls are most frequently on the top of the request list and I am happy to oblige. Another thing that kept me doing and learning more about rolls was the 8 years of preparation for USA teams. To get more competition, John and I would regularly attend the Midlands and Northern Open Tournaments, which of course were folkstyle. So whenever it was needed, the bag of rolling tricks was pulled out. Although John was a master at doubles and singles and was best known for wrestling on his feet, by the end of his career he was also finding rolls to be of value.

Needless to say, 27 ½ seasons of being a college coach gave me repeated opportunities to sharpen my ways of explaining and drilling rolls.

Although there are variations across the country as to what **The Peterson Roll** is, the most common is when the bottom man controls his opponent's far wrist. Then he turns toward his opponent and reaches underneath with his free arm between his opponent's legs and locks on his opponent's inside near leg. Once the opponent is secured in this fashion you should turn your feet toward your opponent and either roll to your outside shoulder or better yet, sit back. This will put you above him with your back trapping him on his back and under you. Sometimes referees fail to recognize the control this gives a man, but most understand this today. This is the same finish as a Granby roll, which I did but in a limited way.

This is only one of many rolls I learned and used. It was not even my favorite, so why is it called **"The Peterson Roll"**?

My first recollection was that it was called that after I started teaching at the Russ Houck Camps in north central Pennsylvania. From 1973 till about 1990 I spent 2 or more weeks there every summer. With up to 300 campers a week I was exposed to a lot of wrestlers and coaches. I believe they began promoting the move in my name.

No, I did not invent or develop **"The Peterson Roll"**. Like most wrestlers I saw others doing it, found some success and so sought to fit it into my style and needs. In the early years I thought Billy Martin and his Granby School of Wrestling were responsible for it well before me.

Evidently, it was promoted in my name because of my NCAA and Olympic success and because I was teaching it to a lot of people. In reality, I think the move is much older than me!

If there are any coaches or fans over 50 who have recollection of the Peterson roll in the early 70's or before, I would love to hear your perspective. Maybe you can bring more light to the **Peterson Roll**.

Proverbs 22:1 has been a trademark of mine for several years. It says:

*"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
Loving favor rather than silver and gold."*

I have sought to tell the truth about the move that bears my family name. Therefore, I cannot claim full credit for the move. I'll teach **The Peterson Roll** and I'll promote **The Peterson Roll**, but I will not claim credit for inventing **The Peterson Roll**. I would rather be honest and keep "a good name" and have God's "loving favor."

***Ben & his brother John now run Camp of Champs Wrestling Camps. Contact them at: Camp of Champs, PO Box 222, Watertown, WI 53094; Phone: 800-505-5099; E-mail: ben@campofchamps.org; Web: www.campofchamps.org.**